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ABSTRACT

Convergence of ideas from counseling and career psychology along with dramatic economic, social, and political changes call attention to the need to understand and respond to the career development of all people, but particularly that of youth. Changes in career education theory and practice include the following: a broader understanding of career development over the life span, occupational choices over the life span, and use of the work setting to help people better understand themselves. A conception of career development has emerged that emphasizes how individuals relate to work, other life roles, life settings, and life events. Implications of the broadened understanding of career for guidance include the following: emphasis on development and prediction; guidance as treatment and stimulus; concept of complementarity to supplement the concept of competitiveness; emphasis on competencies not deficits; expanded focus on individual needs; and competent achieving individuals as a primary goal. Once career development needs of youth have been identified, guidance programs to meet them must be developed and managed. The career development tasks and decisions faced by youth of different ages and levels of maturity require guidance programs that emphasize perceptual, conceptual, and generalization learning. Guidance programs need to emphasize perceptual learning activities during elementary school, conceptual learning activities during middle school and junior high, and generalization learning activities during high school. (YLB)

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Youth Career Planning - Career Development Knows No Boundaries

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As we approach the close of the twentieth century, the world we live and work in continues tO change and become more complex. Far-reaching changes are occurring in the nature and structure of the personal, social, and economic systems in which people live and the industrial and occupational structures where they work. Individuals' values and beliefs about themselves and the societies in which they live are changing, as are the ways they look at and understand their own growth and development. More and more people are looking for meaning in their lives, particularly in the work they do, their situation as family members and as individuals, their involvement in their community, their role in education and training, and their involvement in leisure activities.

Concurrently, and perhaps as a result of these changes, new and more holistic ways of looking at and understanding career behaviour and development have emerged. The theory and research base of counselling psychology has expanded substantially during the past thirty years. In addition, growth in the theory and research base of career psychology has been equally dramatic, resulting in a convergence of ideas from counselling and career psychology concerning career behaviour and development and the interventions to facilitate them (Savickas & Lent, 1994). This convergence of ideas along with the dramatic changes occurring in nations around the world economically, socially, and politically, call attention to the continuing need to better understand and respond to the career development of people of all ages and circumstances but particularly to the career development of youth worldwide.

Changes in Theory and Practice

What are some of the changes that have taken place in the theory and practice of career development? Here is a brief summary.

1. In the early years, the emphasis was on occupational choice, particularly on entry level jobs. This view has given way to a broader, more comprehensive understanding of individuals and their career development over the life span.

2. The notion that an occupational choice is made once and only once during middle or late adolescence has been discarded. We now understand that occupational choices are made over the life span.

3. Since career development occurs over the life span, educational personnel at all levels, early childhood through the adult years, have a part to play in stimulating and enhancing such development.

4. People at work are no longer seen only as objects through which occupations are analyzed and classified. Rather we now understand that a work setting can and should also be used to help people better understand themselves.

5. Career guidance, often mistaken by some as a somewhat simple process of matching people to jobs is now understood in the context of the complex process of human development called career development.

A New Understanding

As these changes occurred, a new understanding of career development emerged. Central to this new understanding was an expanded meaning of the word career. Historically, the word career was not used very often. The word vocation was and it was defined in life purpose terms or as pursuing an occupation

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for which one was especially suited. Later the word career was substituted for the word vocation in the literature but it was still defined as occupation. Then, later, a new way of defining the word career begin to emerge. It was defined in life role terms.

The concept of career encompasses a variety of possible patterns of personal choice related to each individual's total life style . . .
1.occupations
2. education
3. personal and social behaviour
4. learning how-to-learn
5. social responsibility (i.e., citizenship)
6.leisure time activities
(Jones, et al., 1972, p. 6)

An equally broad definition was proposed by Super (1976). He defined career as:

. . . the sequence of major positions occupied by a person throughout his preoccupational, occupational, and postoccupational life: includes work related roles such as those of student, employee, and pensioner, together with complementary avocational, familial, and civic roles. Careers exist only as people pursue them; they are person-cantered (p. 20).

The key to this new understanding of career is a conception of career development which emphasizes not only the ways in which individuals relate to work but includes how individuals relate to the other life roles, life settings, and the events of their lives. It breaks the work focus only barrier of traditional career development and instead focuses on all aspects of individuals' lives. Work is an important part of the lives of people but it is seen in relationship to the other aspects of life so that work is fully understood and appreciated. To bring these ideas together, Gysbers and Moore (1973) proposed the term life career development. The word life indicates that the focus in this concept is on the individual, the self. The word career identifies and relates the many roles in which individuals are involved--student, worker, citizen, parent; the settings in which they find themselves--school, the work place, community, home; and the events which may occur in their lifetimes--entry job, marriage, retirement. The word development is used to show that people change; they are always in the process of becoming. When used in sequence, the word life career development bring these separate meanings together, but at the same time they mean more. Taken collectively and holistically, they describe complete individuals-unique individuals with their own lifestyles.

Life career development is defined as self-development over the life span through the integration of the roles, settings and events of a person's life (Gysbers & Moore, 1975, p. 648).

Describing human development in life career terms provides us with a way to improve and expand guidance programs and practices. It assists us to overcome the traditional but still popular view that the major focus of career is one aspect of an individual's life--occupation. To meet the global challenges of today and tomorrow this narrow point of view must be broadened, and it can be, by understanding that occupation is but one part of life career development. Occupation is important, of course, and must be emphasized in our guidance practices, but it cannot be viewed as something separate from the other life roles, life settings, and the events of individuals' lives (McDaniels & Gysbers, 1992).

Viewed from this broad perspective, it should be clear that

1. I do not use the term life career development to label an educational program. I reserve this term to describe the growth and development of all individuals. The term guidance, on the other hand, describes programs that facilitate individuals' growth and development.

2. I do not use the term career as a new word for occupation. People have careers, the work world has

occupations. Unfortunately, in my opinion, too many people use the word career when they should use the word occupation.

3. I do not think of the word career as being restricted to some people. All people have careers; their lives are their careers.

4. I do not use the word career to delineate one part of human growth and development. While it is useful sometimes to focus on different kinds of development--physical, emotional and intellectual for example--I also need a way of integrating these types of development in a meaningful way. I advocate the use of the concept life career development as an organizing and integrating concept.

Possible Implications

An immediate implication of the broadened understanding of career which has emerged over the years is that guidance programs must focus on the developmental concerns of individuals as well as their crisis needs. Obviously, crises in peoples' lives must be dealt with, but it is not the only emphasis. It is time that we begin to provide relevant career experiences to all individuals but particularly to youth on an ongoing basis; to help them experience what could be in their lives in addition to responding to what their current struggles are. This kind of thinking has many implications for current and future guidance practices in our schools.

Development and Prediction

One implication revolves around the words development and prediction. Traditional guidance practices emphasized the assessment of individuals' abilities and interests for the purpose of selecting appropriate educational experiences or making occupational choices. This emphasis is important but it is not sufficient. What is needed in addition, is an emphasis on development; on providing individuals with experience to help them grow and develop, to consider new possibilities.

Treatment and Stimulus

Related to the development and prediction issue is the treatment and stimulus issue raised by Herr and Cramer (1992). Herr and Cramer suggested that guidance can be used as a treatment condition; as a response to a problem already present. They also suggested however, that guidance can assist individuals to acquire the needed knowledge and skill to be more effective individuals.

As a stimulus variable, vocational guidance not only responds to existing problems but also aids in the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and skills through which one can develop the behaviours necessary to cope with decision points, to acquire an occupational identity, or to develop career maturity. In the diagnostic categories previously identified, vocational guidance processes or counselling were triggered by the presentation of the problem of the person to be assisted. However, vocational guidance as stimulus is more future oriented and developmental, providing behaviours that anticipate choices and build career maturity rather than reacting to situations in which crises trigger action (Herr & Cramer, 1992, p. 12).

Competitiveness and Complementarity

The traditional approach to guidance, as was pointed out previously, has been to assess abilities and interests to develop a profile for prediction purposes. Tyler (1978), recommended that consideration also should be given to helping individuals develop repertoires of competencies. What is needed, she stated is

. . . the concept of complementarity to supplement the concept of competitiveness so prevalent in modern society. Mental testing as it has been practiced for more than half a century is both an expression and a stimulator of this competitiveness. One's worth is measured by how superior or inferior to other

people one is. One's psychological health is judged by location of one's score in a distribution representative of the population. Competencies represent a completely different way of structuring our perceptions of others. The more competencies other people have the better for each of us, and it is essential for the functioning of a complex society that individuals develop different repertoires of competencies. The absolute limits of each person's living time make all around competence for one individual impossible. We need one another (pp. 104-105).

Competencies vs. Deficits

To some people, the major emphasis in guidance activities is on the problems individuals have and the barriers they may face. This emphasis is necessary but it should not be dominant. In my opinion, the major emphasis in guidance activities should be on helping individuals identify the competencies they already have plus on providing learning experiences to assist individuals develop new competencies.

A New Focus: Need Expansion

For many individuals the expected outcome of guidance is the reduction of human needs. Because of this many guidance techniques are designed around an assessment of what is at a particular time. Immediate needs--a personal crisis, information about the job market, help in finding and enrolling in an educational program--are responded to by testing, providing information, and counselling.

There is no question that this focus for guidance must continue to be improved and expanded to meet the needs of all individuals. At the same time, however, as the need reduction focus of guidance is being improved and expanded, increasing attention must be given to the emerging focus of need expansion, particularly for today's youth. The need expansion focus is developmental in nature emphasizing guidance techniques that stimulate and broaden an individual's potential. Instead of waiting until something happens and then filling that need, the emphasis is on developing what could be in individuals. The feasibility of this is underlined particularly well by Super and Bohn (1970) when they stressed the importance that prior experience of a relevant type plays in individual growth and development.

There is a good deal of evidence that individual differences in intelligence, special aptitudes, interests, and self-concepts exist prior to occupational training and experience and that they are not much affected by later experience in the occupation. It would seem that the characteristics in question were either inborn or the result of preoccupational experience--of socialization in the family, in the school, or in the neighbourhood. But it is difficult to conceive of some of these characteristics as innate: interest in scientific work or the concept of oneself as a psychologist could hardly be inborn, although the capacity to develop such interest or self-concept might be. It therefore seems likely that it is prior experience of a relevant type-anticipatory socialization--that develops the potential for the individual differences leading to the choice of a given field of work (p. 11).

If, as Super and Bohn have pointed out, prior experience is a key to later choice, then it seems reasonable to provide individuals with as wide of range of relevant experiences as possible to help them visualize and plan their present and future lives; their possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The provision of these relevant experiences is the essence of a need expansion, developmental guidance program.

A Primary Goal: Competent Achieving Individuals

Based on this kind of thinking a primary goal of guidance is to assist all persons but particularly our youth to become competent achieving individuals; to maximize their potential through the effective use and management of their talents and their environment. As a result guidance programs and processes should focus on assisting all individuals but particularly youth in the development of self-knowledge and interpersonal skills, in obtaining life career planning competencies, in identifying and using placement resources and in gaining knowledge and understanding of life roles, settings and events, specifically

those associated with family, education, work, and leisure. Individuals, their feelings of control over their environment and their own destiny, and their relations with others and institutions are of primary importance in guidance programs.

To accomplish this primary goal of guidance for all individuals, but particularly youth, it is first necessary to identify their life career development needs. What are some of those needs?

1. All individuals. but particularly youth. need improved and expanded opportunities to become aware of and develop their career (self) identity.

Most individuals are disadvantaged when it comes to their opportunities for life career development. Many have inadequate samplings of work world models on which to base their emerging career identities. It is not that they don't have any, but what they have generally are inadequate. A lack of such opportunities however, does not result in occupational knowledge and value vacuums. Opinions are formed, judgments are made, and many times these result in premature educational and occupational foreclosure. An opportunity unknown is not an opportunity at all. If you don't know about something you can't decide about it

2. All individuals. but particularly youth. need improved and expanded opportunities to conceptualize their emerging career identity through continuous and sequential career awareness and career exploration activities.

Individuals need a chance to explore and test out their notions about the work world. Possible career options require continuous testing to help individuals evaluate what such options may mean to them. Individuals need opportunities to ask themselves the question--"What do these options mean to me as I'm developing and growing in my career identity?"

3. All individuals. but particularly youth. need improved and expanded opportunities to generalize their emerging career identities through effective placement and follow through adjustment activities.

They need help in translating their emerging career identities into reality. Individuals of all ages need the opportunity to continuously and systematically explore and test out from an internal frame of reference their personal attributes in relation to the wide range of educational and career opportunities which may be available to them. It should be clearly understood that the primary goal is not to end up choosing people to fit jobs but rather to enlarge the capacity of individuals to make informed decisions.

The Career Development Process

Once the career development needs of youth have been identified, guidance programs to meet these needs must be developed and managed. Meeting the career development needs of all youth can not be done on an ad hoc basis (which unfortunately is the case tOO frequently). It must be approached with the same scope and magnitude given to other educational programs. It must be seen as a major educational objective so that adequate resources are made available to do the job right.

The career development process is viewed as involving three kinds of learning: (1) perceptual, (2) conceptual, and (3) generalization. These kinds of learning are sequential and interactional in nature, one building upon the other. While it is recognized that the three types of learning occur in individuals at all educational levels, the career development tasks and decisions faced by youth of different ages and levels of maturity will require guidance programs which broadly emphasize perceptual learning, conceptual learning, and generalization learning. In educational terms this means that guidance programs need to emphasize perceptual learning activities during the elementary school years, conceptual learning activities during the middle school, junior high years, and generalization learning activities during the high school years.

Perceptual learning has three dimensions; becoming aware, being able to differentiate, and being able to discriminate. Perceptual learning focuses on the processes necessary for individuals to become aware of themselves and their environments and to differentiate and discriminate between and among them. In an career sense, perceptual learning begins at the early school years as youth develop career awareness. Occupational differentiation and discrimination also takes place at this level as youths are able to differentiate between certain kinds of occupations.

Youth at this age, however, are less likely to be able to discuss in detail what persons in various occupations do or what their life styles are like. To do this requires the ability to conceptualize and this occurs as the next type of learning is mastered. As youth learn how to conceptualize occupations as to occupational functions and life styles, they attach values to and develop attitudes about these aspects. These values and attitudes (conceptualizations) become the prism through which occupational generalization learning occurs. As youth come in contact with occupations new to them, they see them in the light of these values and attitudes.

Guidance programs should be arranged in a manner which increases the ability of youth to grasp (perceptualize), transform (conceptualize), and transfer (generalize). Guidance processes used in these programs should emphasize "a vital people oriented approach based on creative expression, non-verbal experience, direct encounters with people in work, and multi media portrayals of real human experience".

Closing Thoughts

Wolfe and Kolb (1980, pp. 1-2) summed up the dynamic life-cantered view of career discussed in this paper when they describe career development as involving one's entire life:

Career development involves one's whole life, not just occupation. As such, it concerns the whole person, needs and wants, capacities and potentials, excitements and anxieties, insights and blindspots, warts and all. More than that, it concerns him/her in the ever-changing contexts of his/her life. The environmental pressures and constraints, the bonds that tie him/her to significant others, responsibilities to children and aging parents, the total structure of one's circumstances are also factors that must be understood and reckoned with. In these terms, career development and personal development converge. Self and circumstances--evolving, changing, unfolding in mutual interaction--constitute the focus and the drama of career development.

Note that Wolfe and Kolb closed their definition of career development with the words "the drama of career development". I call this drama, "the drama of the ordinary" because it is unfolding and evolving each and every day. And because it is ordinary, it is not often seen or appreciated by individuals. It is veiled by ordinariness. As a result individuals may fail to understand itS dynamic nature and the substantial impact it has throughout their lives. By using the broader concept of life career development as a way to understand human growth and development--the human career--I propose that guidance programs world-wide make the drama of career development, the drama of the extraordinary.

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